

I have received several calls from people regarding the TEA fire. As a result I felt a need to try and answer some questions I have fielded recently.

The TEA fire has made a huge impact on the community of Santa Barbara. I have been moved by the willingness of those not immediately affected by the fire. Trying in their own ways to reach out and help those in need. I also have been onsite with homeowners who have lost everything and are now in the process of figuring out how to rebuild.

As a general contractor, I have walked through some of the early procedures with homeowners as they begin the process. The city and the county have worked hard to be available and cooperative with as much assistance as possible. An Ombudsman by the name of Tony Nisich has been hired to help out. The information they are providing is very helpful. Homeowners may not be familiar with all the information that is requested in the permit process. This is where I have found myself, architects and other general contractors helping out with assisting in filling out the applications. This assistance is provided as a way of helping out with no expectations.

The city and county have also modified their procedure for obtaining permits. Their goal is to expedite applications to help people get back into their homes as soon as possible. The city and county will need drawings of what you plan to build. If you stay with something close to the original home, the process will be quicker. I am finding that homeowners need assistance with obtaining new plans from their existing homes. Experienced local architects and builders can provide fast and efficient guidance through the process because they are familiar with the recent modifications as well as seasoned in working with local officials. In some situations, provisions have been made by both the city and county for people to have temporary housing on their property during the rebuilding process.

The insurance industry has also been extremely forth coming with guidance. From the start they assist with the rebuilding process. Part of it is obtaining estimates on the cost to rebuild. The city and county have plans for many of the existing homes on file. Obtaining copies and then using those to get an estimate to rebuild will give you a start. However there are new building codes. Therefore make sure you are aware of the difference in the cost between your drawing on file and those that will be approved by the city or county.

Also be aware this is a fluid process and things will change. People are doing everything to give out information that has changed or we may misinterpret what is being communicated. There may be some bumps in the road.

I have never personally been through this but one of our partners lost a home in the Painted Cave fire. He has shared many stories and his experience. My heart goes out to all. And as a community, I look forward to all of us helping out our neighbors through the rebuilding process.